

A
DECLARATION
OF THE
GENERAL COURT
OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS

Holden at Boston in New-England, October 18. 1659. Concerning
The execution of two Quakers.



Although the justice of our proceedings against William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, and Mary Dyer, supported by the Authority of this Court, the Lawes of the Country, and the Law of God, may rather persuade us to expect encouragement and commendation from all prudent and pious men, then convince us of any necessity to Apologize for the same, yet forasmuch as men of weaker parts, out of pity and commiseration (a commendable and Christian virtue yet easily abused, and susceptible of sinister and dangerous impressions) for want of full information, may be less satisfied, and men of perverser principles, may take occasion hereby to calumniate us, and render us as bloody persecutors, to satisfy the one, and stop the mouths of the other, we thought it requisite to declare. That about three Years since, divers persons, professing themselves Quakers, (of whose pernicious Opinions and Practises we had received intelligence from good hands, from Barbadoes to England, arrived at Boston) whose persons were onely secured, to be sent away by the first opportunity, without censure or punishment, although their professed tenents, turbulent and contemptuous behaviour to Authority would have justified a severer animadversion, yet the prudence of this Court, was exercised, onely in making provision to secure the Peace and Order here established, against their attempts, whose design (we were well assured of by our own experience, as well as by the example of their predecessors in Munster) was to undermine and ruine the same. And accordingly a Law was made and published, prohibiting all Masters of Ships, to bring any Quakers into this Jurisdiction, and themselves from coming in, on penalty of the House of Correction, till they could be sent away: Notwithstanding which, by a back Door, they found entrance, and the penalty inflicted on themselves, proving insufficient to restrain their impudent and insolent obtrusions, was increased by the loss of the ears of those that offended the second time, which also being too weak a defence against their impetuous frantick fury, necessitated us to endeavour our security, and upon serious consideration after the former experiments, by their incessant assaults, a Law was made, that such persons should be banished, on pain of Death, according to the example of England in their provision against Jesuites, which sentence being regularly pronounced at the last Court of Assistants against the parties above named, and they either returning, or continuing presumptuously in this Jurisdiction, after the time limited, were apprehended, & owning themselves to be the persons banished, were sentenced (by the Court) to death, according the Law aforesaid, which hath been executed upon two of them: Mary Dyer upon the petition of her Son, and the mercy and clemency of this Court, had liberty to depart within two dayes, which she hath accepted of. The consideration of our gradual proceeding, will vindicate us from the clamorous accusations of severity; our own just and necessary defence, calling upon us (other means fayling) to offer the poynt, which these persons have violently, and wilfully rushed upon, and thereby become felons de se, which might it have been prevented, and the Sovereign Law *salus populi* been preserved, our former proceedings, as well as the sparing of Mary Dyer, upon an inconsiderable intercession, will manifestly evince, we desire their lives absent, rather then their death present.

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NEW-ENGLAND.

Edward Ransom, Secretary.

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